Shoes for Pilgrims and Warriors

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"And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace." Ephesians 6:15.

THE Christian was evidently intended to be in motion, for here are shoes for his feet. His head is provided with a helmet, for he is to be thoughtful. His heart is covered with a breastplate, for he is to be a man of feeling. His whole nature is protected by a shield, for he is called to endurance and caution. And that he is to be active is certain, for a sword is provided for his hand to use and sandals with which his feet are to be shod. To suppose that a Christian is to be motionless as a post and inanimate as a stone, or merely pensive as a weeping willow and passive as a reed shaken by the wind, is altogether a mistake! God works in us and His Grace is the great motive power which secures our salvation, but He does not so work in us as to chloroform us into unconscious submission, or engineer us into mechanical motion—He orchestrates all our activities by working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure." Grace imparts healthy life and life rejoices in activity! The Lord never intended His people to be automatons worked by clockwork, or cold and dead statues—He meant them to have life, to have it abundantly—and in the power of that life to be full of energy! It is true He makes us lie down in green pastures, but equally certain is it that He leads us onward beside the still waters! A true Believer is an active person—he has feet and uses them.

Now, he who marches meets with stones, or if as a warrior he dashes into the thick of the conflict he is assailed with weapons and, therefore, he needs to be suitably shod to meet his perils. The active and energetic Christian meets with temptations which do not happen to others. Idle persons can scarcely be said to be in danger—they are a stage beyond that and are already overcome! Satan scarcely needs to tempt them—they rather tempt him and are a fermenting mass in which sin exceedingly multiplies—a decaying body around which the vultures of vice are sure to gather. But earnest laborious Believers are sure to be assailed, even as fruit bearing trees are certain to be visited by the birds. Satan cannot stand a man who earnestly serves God—he does damage to the arch-enemy's dominions and, therefore, he must be incessantly assailed. The Prince of Darkness will try, if he can, to injure the good man's character, to break his communion with God, to spoil the simplicity of his faith, to make him proud of what he is doing, or to make him despair of success. In some way or other he will, if possible, bruise the worker's heel or trip him up, or lame him altogether. Because of all these dangers, Infinite Mercy has provided Gospel shoes for the Believer's feet—shoes of the best kind—such as only those warriors wear who serve the Lord of Hosts!

We shall at this time first examine the shoes and then try them on.

I. Our first duty is to EXAMINE THE SHOES which are provided for us by our Captain. And in doing so we are delighted to find that they come from a blessed Maker, for the feet of the Believer are to be shod with a Divine preparation. Many preparations and inventions are used for protecting feet, but this is a preparation in which infinite skill has been displayed and the same wisdom put forth as in the Gospel, which is the masterpiece of God! Every portion of the Gospel is from God and all the influence which makes it a Gospel of Peace is His—and we are therefore thankful to find that we are to wear "the preparation of the Gospel of Peace." It would not be meet that he who is helmeted with Divine Salvation should be shod with a mere human production! Having begun in the Spirit, it would be strange to be made perfect in the flesh. We would not be like the image of the monarch's dream whose head was of fine gold and whose feet were part of iron and part of clay. We rejoice that all the pieces of armor which compose our panoply come forth from the celestial Armorer whose productions are without a flaw!

We are glad to find that the shoes are made of excellent material, for they are composed of "the preparation of the Gospel of Peace"—and what better material can there be than the Gospel—the Gospel of Peace and that peace which grows out of the Gospel? This is what is meant. We believe in a Gospel which was formed in the purpose of God from all eternity, designed with Infinite Wisdom, worked out at an enormous expense, costing nothing less than the blood of Jesus, brought home by Infinite Power, even by the might of the Holy Spirit! It is a Gospel full of blessings, any one of which would outweigh a world in price—a Gospel as free as it is full, a Gospel everlasting and immutable, a Gospel of which we can never think too much, whose praises we can never exaggerate! It is from this choice Gospel that its choicest essence is taken, namely, its peace. And from this peace those sandals are prepared with which a man may tread on the lion and the adder, yes, and on the fierce burning coals of malice, slander and persecution! What better shoes can our souls require?

What matchless material for girding the pilgrim's feet is that which is here mentioned, namely the peace which comes from the Gospel, the preparation of heart and life which springs of a full knowledge, reception and experience of the Gospel in our souls! What does it mean? It means, first, that a sense of perfect peace with God is the grandest thing in all the world with which to travel through life. Let a man know that his sins are forgiven him for Christ's name's sake, that he is reconciled to God by the death of His Son and that between him and God there is no ground of difference—and what a joyful pilgrim he becomes! When we know that as the Lord looks on us, His glance is full of infinite, undivided affection, that He sees us in Jesus Christ as cleansed from every speck of sin and as, "accepted in the Beloved," and that by virtue of a complete Atonement we are forever reconciled to God, then do we march through life without fear, booted for all the exigencies of the way, yes, ready to plunge through fire and water, thorn and thistle, bush and briar without fear! A man at

peace with God dreads neither the ills of life nor the terrors of death! Poverty, sickness, persecution and pain have lost their sting when sin is pardoned! What is there that a man needs to fear when he knows that in no affliction will there be any trace of the judicial anger of God, but all will come from a Father's hand and work his lasting good! Goliath had armor of brass upon his legs, but he is better armed who wears a full assurance of peace with God through the Gospel! He shall tread down his enemies and crush them as grapes in the winepress! His shoes shall be iron and brass and, shod with them he shall stand upon the high places of the earth and his feet shall not slip. Achilles received a deadly wound in the heel, but no arrow can pierce the heel of the man whose foot is sandaled with reconciliation by atoning blood! Many a warrior has fainted on the march and dropped from the ranks exhausted, but no weariness of the way can happen to the man who is upheld by the eternal God, for his strength shall be renewed daily.

The preparation of the Gospel of Peace here mentioned must be understood to comprehend more than the legal peace ofjustification by faith. If we would enjoy the fullest comfort of the well-shod pilgrim, we must have the exceeding peace which springs from intimate, undisturbed communion with God. We should pray not only to feel that we have been brought out of our natural enmity into peace with God, so as to be no more culprits but children, but also to dwell in the full joy of our new relationship. It is a sweet thing for a child of God to feel that he is so acting that his heavenly Father has no reason for walking contrary to him. You know right well that as a child of God, you will not be condemned and cast away as an alien—but you also know that as a child, you may greatly displease your Father and render it necessary for Him to frown upon you, and visit you with stripes—and this you should, with the utmost diligence and prayerful-ness, labor to prevent. There are times when the Lord of pilgrims hides His face from them in sore displeasure, and then it is very hard travelling. Life is "a great and terrible wilderness" when the Lord's Presence is withdrawn. The more a man loves the Lord, the more does he suffer when there is a temporary suspension of happy communion between his soul and Heaven—he cannot be happy again till he knows that he is fully restored to the paternal favor. O child of God, you will very soon have your feet torn with the briars of the way if you do not abide in fellowship with God! When Adam had lost his oneness with God, he found out that he was naked, and so will you if you lose your communion with Jesus. Where before you dashed onward as with a charmed life, treading the world and all its cares beneath your feet, you will find yourself pierced with many sorrows, bleeding with acute griefs, scratched, torn, lacerated with trials, losses, crosses and endless annoyances. If we continue in the love of Jesus, pleasing Him in all things, jealously watching and carefully observing His will, our mind will be kept by the peace of God which passes all understanding—and our road to Heaven will be a pleasant one! It may indeed be very rough in itself and in the judgment of others,

but it will be so smoothed to us by the peace which reigns within that we shall glory in infirmity, exult in suffering and triumph in distress, knowing that

the Lord is with us and no harm can come to us. Thus you see that the peace which comes ofjustification—and the fuller peace which arises from enjoying the love of God are a grand preparation for our life's journey—shoes for the feet unrivalled in excellence!

It is also a grand sandal for a pilgrim's feet when the Gospel of Peace has fully conformed his mind to the Lord's will. Some children of God are not at peace with God because they do not fully acquiesce in the Divine purposes. To them the pilgrim path must be a painful one, for nothing can please them—their self-will creates swarms of vexations for them. But to hearts which have crucified self and yielded all to the will of God, the most thorny paths are pleasant. He who can say concerning all things, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight," is shod for all ways and weathers, and may march on undismayed. Fully conformed to the Divine will, saints are invulnerable and invincible, "none shall be weary nor stumble among them, neither shall the laces of their shoes be broken"—

"They hold by nothing here below. Appoint their journey, and they go Through joy or grief they march the same, Triumphant still in Jesus' name."

Surely it is when the heart is completely at one with God that the true beauty of the Christian character is seen! Then it is that the heavenly Bridegroom cries out, "How beautiful are your feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!" Then, too, the Church in her tribulation becomes bright and glorious, like her Lord, of whom we read, "His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Shod with perfect delight in the will of the Lord, we are able to surmount all the difficulties and trials of the way, for it becomes sweet to suffer when we see that it is the will of God. Resignation is good, but perfect acquiescence is better, and happy—thrice happy is the man who feels it! No silver sandals were ever so precious, no covering of golden mail adorned with precious stones were so glorious to look upon as a mind molded to the Divine Will, perfectly in tune with the mind of the Lord Most High!

The preparation of the Gospel of Peace, you thus see, is, in many aspects, the fittest help for our journey to the promised land. And he who has his feet shod with it need not fear the flinty ways, the craggy rocks, or the thorny passes.

But the Gospel of Peace has another side to it, for it not only brings us peace with God, but it inspires us with peace towards ourselves. Civil war is the worst of wars and for a man to be at discord with himself is the worst of strife. The worst peril of Christian pilgrimage is that which arises from the pilgrim's own self—and if he is ill at ease within himself, his course cannot be a happy one. The prayer of the evening hymn is very suggestive—

"That with the world, myself and Thee, I, ever I sleep, at peace may be." It is a most necessary matter to have peace at home. It is a cruel case for a man when his own heart condemns him. To whom shall he look for a defense when his own conscience indicts him and all his faculties turn king's evidence against him? It is to be feared that many Believers ha-

bitually do that which they would not like to be questioned upon by the rule of the Word of God—they have to close their eyes to many passages of Scripture, or else they would be uneasy in their consciences. Brothers and Sisters, this makes wretched travelling! It is like walking through a wood with bare feet. If you cannot satisfy your own heart that you are right, you are in a sad case, indeed, and the sooner matters are altered the better. But if a man can say before the living God, "I know that what I am about to do is right and whatever comes of it, I have a pure motive and the Lord's sanction to sustain me in it," then he proceeds to action with a nimble tread. Such a pilgrim is girt for the roughest of ways and will hold on his way joyfully to the end. Rest of conscience shoes us right well, but a question as to the rightness of our procedure makes us barefooted.

Come what may, if we order our ways with reverent regard to the Lord's commands, we shall be able to confront the future with serenity, for we shall not have to accuse ourselves of bringing ourselves into trouble by sin, or losing our joys by indulging in forbidden things. When the Believer falls into any trouble through having been zealous for God, then may he spread his complaint before God with the full expectation that He will bring him out of all his difficulties, for is it not written, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord...none of his steps shall slide"? Oh, to walk in such a way that your conscience is void of offense both towards God and towards man—then integrity and uprightness will preserve you and your goings will be established. "He will keep the feet of His saints." "He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

While travelling through the mazes of life, another form of the preparation of the Gospel of Peace will be of essential service to us, namely, peace with our fellow men. The Gospel of Peace leads us into the closest bonds of amity with our fellow Believers, although, alas, it is not always possible to prevent offenses arising, even with the best of them! If we cannot make all our Brothers and Sisters amiable, we are at least to be at peace on our side—and if we succeed in this, no great disagreement can arise, for it always needs two to make a quarrel. It is well to go to bed every night feeling, "I have no difference in my soul with any of the members of Christ's body. I wish well to everyone and love them all in my heart." This would enable us to travel in right royal style over fields which now are often stony with controversy and thorny with prejudice. Theological conflicts and ecclesiastical squabbles would utterly disappear if we were shod with the true spirit of the Gospel of Peace. An unwillingness to think harshly of any Christian is a sandal most easy to the feet, protecting it from many a thorn. Wear it in the Church, wear it in all holy service, wear it in all fellowship with Christians and you will find your way among the brethren greatly smoothed! You will win their love and esteem before long, and avoid a world ofjealousy and opposition which would otherwise have impeded your course.

It is well to travel girt with this shoe ofpeace with all mankind. "If it is possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men." It is barely possible, but aim at it—and if you do not perfectly succeed, try again. Unconverted men will not love your religion, for they are carnal. That you cannot help, but you must love them, carnal as they are, and by degrees you may win them to love both you and your Lord. If they will not live peaceably with you, yet give them your love and live peaceably with them. Be not easily provoked. Bear and forbear, forgive and love on, return good for evil, seek to benefit even the most unthankful and you will travel to Heaven in the most pleasant possible manner. Hatred, envy and persecution may come, but a loving spirit materially blunts their edge and oftentimes inherits the promise, "When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." If you have to feel, "Now, I am going this part of the journey with the view of avenging a wrong," you will not journey pleasantly or safely! But if from the depth of your soul you can say, "When Christ made peace with God for me, He made peace between me and my bitterest foe," you will march on like a hero! Travel through the world as a sincere philanthropist, with your feet shod with love to all born of woman and your course will be happy and honorable. God grant us that loving spirit which comes of free Grace and is the work of the Holy Spirit, for that is a mystic sandal which gives wings to the feet and lightens a weary road.

Having thus described these Gospel shoes, I should like to say that the feet of our Lord and Master were sandaled in this manner. He was the King of Pilgrims and to Him, the way was even rougher than it can be to us. But these were the shoes He wore and, having worn them, He counsels us to put on the same. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," He said. Always while He dwelt in this world He was in fellowship with God. He could truly say, "I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. He who sent Me is with Me. I am not alone because the Father is with Me." He always sought the good of His chosen—"having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And as for His enemies, He had only prayers and tears for them. He was at peace with all above, around and within Him. That peaceableness of His, that wonderful serenity, was one of the marvelous points in His Character. You never find Him worried, disturbed, flustered. No, that is ourinfirmity because we take our shoes off and are taken by surprise—but His feet were always shod—He dwelt in perfect peace and, therefore, He was the grandest Pilgrim and the noblest Worker. We cannot need to be better shod than our Lord was! Let us sandal our hearts with His peace and we shall be royally prepared for our journey!

I may add that these shoes are such as will last all our journey through. We feel most comfortable in our old shoes, for they fit the foot so well, but they will at last wear out. These shoes of my text are old, yet always new and are like those which Israel wore in the wilderness, of which it is said, "Your shoe is not waxen old upon your foot." The everlasting Gospel

yields us everlasting peace! The good news from Heaven never grows stale, neither will the peace which it brings ever become like the Gibeonites' "old shoes and patched." The man who wears the preparation of the Gospel of Peace was comforted by it when he was young and it still cheers him in his later days—it made him a good traveler when he first set out and it will protect his last footsteps when he crosses the river Jordan and climbs the celestial hills!

Friends, are you all thus booted for your life-journey? See you well to it.

II. We come now to our second business, LET US TRY ON THESE SHOES.

Here our joy is great to find that they fit perfectly and need no tugging and straining to draw them on. By a miracle more strange than magic, the preparation of the Gospel of Peace suits every foot, whether it is that of a babe in Grace, or a strong man in Christ Jesus. No man can travel well, much less engage in battle successfully unless his dress is comfortable, especially that part of it which relates to the feet. And here we have the grand advantage that no foot was ever uneasy when once it had put on this shoe! Mephibosheths who have been lame in both feet even from birth have found this shoe works miracles and causes them to leap as harts upon the mountains! The Gospel of Peace helps all our infirmities, heals all the wounds of our old sins and suits itself to all our tender places. Whatever the weakness may be, the Gospel provides for it! Whatever the distress, its peace relieves it. Other shoes have their pinching places, but he who wears the preparation of the Gospel of Peace shall know no straitness of spirit, for the Gospel gives rest to our minds. Real Gospel really believed, means real peace! That which disturbs us is something alien to the Spirit of the Gospel, but the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Peace. Who would not wear such a shoe?

The preparation of the Gospel of Peace is a wonderful shoe for giving its wearer a firm foothold. Surely it was of this shoe that Habakkuk sang when he said, "The Lord God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon my high places." When persons are on slippery rocks, or dangerous eminences, where a fall would be fatal, it is well to be so shod that the feet get grip and hold. Nothing aids a man to stand fast in the Lord like the peace of the Gospel. Many professors are very soon thrown over—they are attacked with doctrinal error and they readily yield. They are assailed by temptation and their feet go out from under them. But the man who has perfect peace with God and who relies upon the Most High shall never be moved, for the Lord upholds him. His shoes have driven themselves into the eternal Truths of God and hold like anchors! Tell him the Atonement is not true, preach up to him the bloodless neology of modern thought and he ridicules the ineffectual attempt because he knows whom he has believed and feels a heavenly peace within flowing from the substitutionary Sacrifice. Tell him that the Doctrines of Grace are a mistake, that salvation is all of free will and man's merit, and he says, "No, I know better. I know the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace to be true by experience, I know I am God's chosen, I know that I am called, I know that I am justified, for I know that I have

peace with God as the result of all these." You cannot move him an inch! His creed is interwoven with his personal consciousness and there is no arguing him out of it! In these days of skepticism, when no man seems to have any resting place, it is well to be so shod that you can and do stand on the Truth and cannot be blown about like thistledown in the breeze.

The shoe of our text is equally famous for its suitability for marching in the ways of daily duty. Soldiers have little time for contemplating the comfort of their shoes, or their fitness for mere standing, for they have daily marching to perform. We, too, have our marching, and as far as some of us are concerned, they are no mere parades, but heavy marching involving stern toil and protracted effort. A soul at perfect peace with God is in a fit state for the severest movements. A sense of pardoned sin and reconciliation with God fits us for anything and everything. When the burden of sin is gone, all other burdens are light. Since we are no longer on the road to Hell, the roughest places of our pilgrimage do not distress us. In every sphere, a heart at perfect peace with God is the soundest preparation for progress and the surest support under trials. Try on these shoes, my Brothers and Sisters, and see if they do not enable you to run without weariness and walk without fainting. All earth cannot find their like—they are unrivalled—they make men like the angels to whom duty is delight!

These Gospel shoes are also an effectual preservative from all the ordinary roughness of the road of life, although to most of us it is far from smooth. He who expects to find a grassy walk all the way to Heaven, well mown and rolled, or looks for a highway leveled by a steam-roller, will be sorrowfully mistaken. The way is rugged, like the goat tracks of Engedi, and oftentimes so narrow and so far on high that the eagle's eye cannot discern it! The blood of former pilgrims stains the way to Glory, yet from all perils to our feet, the preparation of the Gospel of Peace will guard us! From fears within and fighting without, Gospel peace will surely deliver us. Perhaps we are more vexed with little trials than with great ones—certainly we bear them with far less equanimity—but a peaceful heart protects alike from tiny thorns and terrible rocks. Everyday vexations as well as extraordinary tribulations we shall bear cheerfully when the Peace of God keeps our heart and mind!

Beloved, this shoe is also good for climbing. Do you ever practice the holy art of spiritual climbing, God's blessed Spirit leading the way? Do you ever climb Mount Tabor to be transfigured with your Master? Have you watched with

Him one hour and seen His conflict and His victory? Have you ever looked from Pisgah's glorious heights upon the goodly land and Lebanon, anticipating the glory to be revealed? Has your spirit ever been away there alone in mysterious communing with God upon the Hermons? I trust you know what climbing work means and that you have enjoyed rapt ecstatic fellowship with Jesus Christ. But of this I am sure, you can never mount on high if your feet are not shod with the Peace of God! Unshod with these sacred sandals, there is no

climbing! Only those who delight themselves in the Lord God shall ascend the Hill of the Lord and stand in His Holy Place!

The heart prepared by peace with God is shod suitably for running as well as for climbing. There are periods when all our energies must be put forth and we must rush forward at the heroic pace, for, at certain passages in life's campaign, things must be carried by storm and every faculty must dash forward at its swiftest speed. We cannot at all times keep up the swiftness, which, nevertheless, is occasionally required of us, but the man for a push and a dash is he whose soul abides in peace. Troubled in heart, our feet are blistered, our knees are weak and our movements are painfully slow. But the joy of the Lord is our strength and in the power of it we become like Asahel, fleet of foot as a young roe. Try on these shoes, my limping Brothers and Sisters! What do you say?

Lastly, this shoe is good for fighting, and that I gather from Paul having put it among the armor. In the old style, fighting meant hand to hand and foot to foot, and then it was necessary for the feet to be well protected and, indeed, so well covered over as to be useful in assault, for the warriors kicked with their feet as well as struck with their hands—and many a foe was placed hors de combat with a heavy kick! Christians are expected to fight with their feet in the battle against sin and Satan! Indeed, they must fight with all their powers and faculties! That grand promise has been given to us, "The God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." What a tread we will give him when we once have the opportunity! We shall need to have our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace to break that old dragon's head and grind his snares to powder! And God helping us, we shall do it! Our Covenant Head has trampled on the old serpent and so shall all His members.

Let this suffice concerning these shoes, but a serious question suggests itself to me. Are there not some of you who have to travel to eternity and yet have no shoes for the journey? How can the unconverted man hope to reach Heaven when he has no shoes on his feet? How will he bear the troubles of life, the temptations of the flesh and the trials of death? I pray you, unconverted ones, look at yourselves and at the way—and see how impossible it is for you to accomplish the journey unless you go to Jesus and obtain from Him the Grace which will make you pilgrims to Glory! Go, I pray you, and find peace in Him—and then your life-journey shall be happy and safe, and the end eternal joy—for your feet will be shod with "the preparation of the Gospel of Peace."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: EPHESIANS 6:10-24.

Verse 10. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might Everything depends upon that. Whether you are called upon to work, or to wait, or to watch, or to suffer, you have need to be strong. If you are not strong, the very armor that you wear will be a burden to you! It is of the utmost importance that Christians should be as strong in Grace as they can possibly be. And the power that is to be in them is to be the power of God—"the power of His might." What a wonderful power that is! The power of flesh is

weakness and the power of man is fading, but the power of God is almighty and unchangeable! And if we can be girt about with this power, there is scarcely any limit to what we may successfully attempt.

"Finally"—as if this were a matter of the highest importance, to be considered first and last—"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." You know how strong Paul was—he was a veritable giant for Christ and he here calls upon his brethren to be as he was. He did not want to be brother to dwarfs, so he appealed to his brethren to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

11. Put on the whole armor of Got. The armor of God will not serve you unless you, yourself, are strong. It needs a strong man to carry girdle, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet and sword. Let me impress upon you the fact that we must first of all get strong within and after that, "put on the whole armor of God," that armor which God has provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ—that armor which distinguishes men as belonging to the army of God. Do not merely

put on a part of it, but put on the whole of it! Do not simply look at the armor and clean it up so as to keep it bright, but put it on, wear it—it is meant for you to use in the great battle for the right against the wrong! "Put on the whole armor of God."

11. That you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devii. He will attack you sometimes by force and sometimes by fraud. By might or by sleight he will seek to overcome you and no unarmed man can stand against him. Never go out without all your armor on, for you can never tell where you may meet the devil. He is not omnipresent, but nobody can tell where he is not, for he and his troops of devils appear to be found everywhere on this earth.

12. For we wrestle not against flesh and bloot. Our great fight is not against our fellow men. As Christians, we go not forth armed with sword and shield to fight against "flesh and blood."

12. But against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Our battle is against evil wherever it is to be found, against evil in every shape and form. Evil is as much in the world today as it was in Paul's time and we must fight against it everywhere. We are not to shut our eyes to it, or try to patch up a compromise with it. Christians are bound to fight against evil principalities, evil powers, the evil rulers of the darkness of this world—and wicked spirits in high places.

13. Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God. What stress the Apostle lays upon this point! He repeats the command he had just given and again emphasizes the fact that it is "the whole armor of God" that is to be worn. There are some professing Christians who only in part obey the injunction given here—but it is no use to wear a part of the Christian armor and to leave the rest of the soul unarmed. A little leak will sink a ship and the absence

of one piece of the armor of God may cost a man his soul! "Therefore take unto you the whole armor of God."

13. That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stanc. That is what we have to do—to keep our place and our standing as Christians right to the end. To be apparently pure and holy for a time is no use at all. Transient professors will find everlasting ruin, "but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." We are in God's army for life—we can never quit this warfare till God shall call us home!

14. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with Truth. Let this girdle of the everlasting Truth of God brace you up. Let it tighten all the rest of your armor.

14. And having on the breastplate of righteousnes. Let your heart be guarded by the knowledge that you are right with God—that you love that which is holy and true. Put on the righteousness of Christ, Himself, as the best possible protection for your heart.

15. And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Rough roads grow smooth when these blessed Gospel sandals are on your feet. A little stone in the shoe will make the pilgrim's progress a very wearisome and painful one, so try to keep out all the stones—everything about which you have any scruple, or that you think may be wrong—and walk in the safe and narrow way set forth in the Gospel of Peace.

16. Above all. Over all, covering all from head to foot.

16. Taking the shield of faith. [See Sermon #416, Volume 7—SHIELD OF FAITH.] For you need this shield to protect both your armor and yourself.

16. Therewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Not only the fiery darts of the Wicked One, but those, also, of wicked men and wicked women who may throw at you afar, darts that are all ablaze which would burn as well as pierce you if you were not well guarded against them. Nothing can quench these fiery darts but the shield of faith!

17. And take the helmet of salvatioi.. You used to wear the helmet of pride with its fine nodding plumes, but that has been taken off of you long ago. Now put on "the helmet of Salvation." This will effectually defend your head and no sword will be able to cleave through it to injure you. Your brain and everything that is connected with your mental powers will be right when you know that you are saved—and when the power of God's salvation is working within you!

17. And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. [See Sermon #2201, Volume 37—the sword of the spirit.] There is no sword like that! It pierces even to the dividing

asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nothing can resist the Word of God if it is only wielded aright. There is one more weapon in the heavenly armory.

18. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. When you cannot use your sword, and even when you can hardly grasp your shield, you can pray. That weapon

of "all prayer" is of the handiest kind because it can be turned in any and every direction. "Praying always with all prayer"—groaning prayers, weeping prayers, prayers that are made up of single words, prayers that have not a word in them, prayers for others, prayers of confession, prayers of thanksgiving—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

18. And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. But will prayer for other people help us? Yes, very much! You will sometimes find that when you cannot pray for yourself, it is a good plan to pray for somebody else. Think of some child of God and pray for him or her—and then the fire of supplication will soon burn up in your heart! The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends and He will do the same for you. I have heard many of our members say that when they have felt bound in prayer, they have pleaded for their Pastor and afterwards they have been able to pray for themselves. I advise more of you to try that plan—it will do me good and then if it also does you good, there will be a double advantage in it! Paul was of the same mind as I am, for he added.

19, 20. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds. "An ambassador in bonds!" Such a thing was never heard of in earthly courts! We never think of chaining an ambassador, but this is how men treated this great messenger from the court of Heaven!

20-22. That therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak But that you also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that you might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. It is well for Christian people to know how it fares with their spiritual guides. Paul wished the Ephesian saints to know in what state of heart he found himself—that they might the more intelligently pray for him.

23, 24. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen. I am sure that we can heartily repeat that benediction. May the Lord send much of His Grace to all His people in every part of the earth who love Him in sincerity! Amen.